

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 9, 2018

Agenda Item: Nevada Lake WMA Forest Habitat Enhancement Project

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Minutes

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Background:

FWP has proposed a forest habitat enhancement project on 465 acres of the Nevada Lake WMA (near Helmville in Powell County) for the purpose of: improving elk and deer winter forage, restoring historically open-stand conditions dominated by large-diameter ponderosa pine, restoring a stand structure that allows fire to burn at a low-severity appropriate for the historic fire regime, recruiting ponderosa pine regeneration, and reducing fuel loading. The treatments would enhance forest and grassland vegetation that provide a valuable source of seasonal forage and cover for wildlife. Treatments would include enhancing aspen stands, thinning understory ingrowth, and improving forest resiliency by reducing fire risk and beetle-infestation risk.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

FWP released a draft environmental assessment seeking public review of the proposed project on April 25, 2018; it was available for public comment for 30 days. A legal notice of the proposal and availability of the draft EA was published in four newspapers. FWP mailed 27 printed copies of the draft EA and emailed approximately 28 notifications of the EA's availability to adjacent landowners, interested individuals, groups and agencies. FWP received four comments total, all from individuals. Two comments supported the project, one did not indicate support or opposition, and one opposed the project.

Alternatives and Analysis:

If no action were taken, FWP expects that valuable wildlife habitat, including critical ungulate winter range would continue to deteriorate due to current forest conditions, and the risk of insects, disease, and high-intensity wildfire hazard would continue to increase.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends the commission approve the proposed action to move forward with project implementation to achieve habitat benefits, including the long-term availability of forage on elk winter range and other wildlife habitat values.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission approve the Nevada Lake WMA Forest Habitat Enhancement Project.